
**Early Learning & Children's
Services Committee**

HB 1560

Brief Description: Establishing a pilot program to provide preschool tuition scholarships for children in foster care.

Sponsors: Representatives P. Sullivan, Walsh, Pettigrew, Appleton, Simpson, Kenney, Lantz, Santos and O'Brien.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Establishes a pilot program to provide preschool tuition scholarships for children in foster care for 60 or more days.

Hearing Date: 2/13/07

Staff: Sydney Forrester (786-7120).

Background:

Washington state offers two free early learning programs to preschoolers. The Head Start program serves about 18,000 children ages three to five years from low-income families. Funding for Head Start is 80 percent federal with a 20 percent local match. Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) is 100 percent state funded and serves a little under 6,000 children per year.

In addition to Head Start and ECEAP, the state provides subsidies to low-income families who are working, preparing to work, or looking for work. Subsidies are paid directly to providers on behalf of a qualifying child.

Summary of Bill:

A two-year pilot program to provide 200 preschool tuition scholarships to children in foster care will be administered by the DSHS and the DEL. Children between the ages of three and five years who have been in foster care for 60 or more days are eligible to receive a scholarship. The

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amount of the scholarship is limited to the difference between the provider's usual and customary rate and the amount of any Working Connections subsidy or other subsidy for which the child is otherwise eligible.

The DSHS will select three regional offices representing geographic diversity for implementation and will consult with the DEL to set criteria for identifying high-quality early learning programs where the tuition scholarships may be used. Base on the criteria developed for defining high-quality programs, the DSHS regional offices will consult with the local child care resource and referral (CCRR) office to identify the community providers where scholarships may be used. The CCRR will assist foster parents with assessing the type of program appropriate for the child and with completing the enrollment process.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.